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THE COMEDY OF A MIDSUMMER
NIGHT'S DREAM

William Shakspeare

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Midfommer nights
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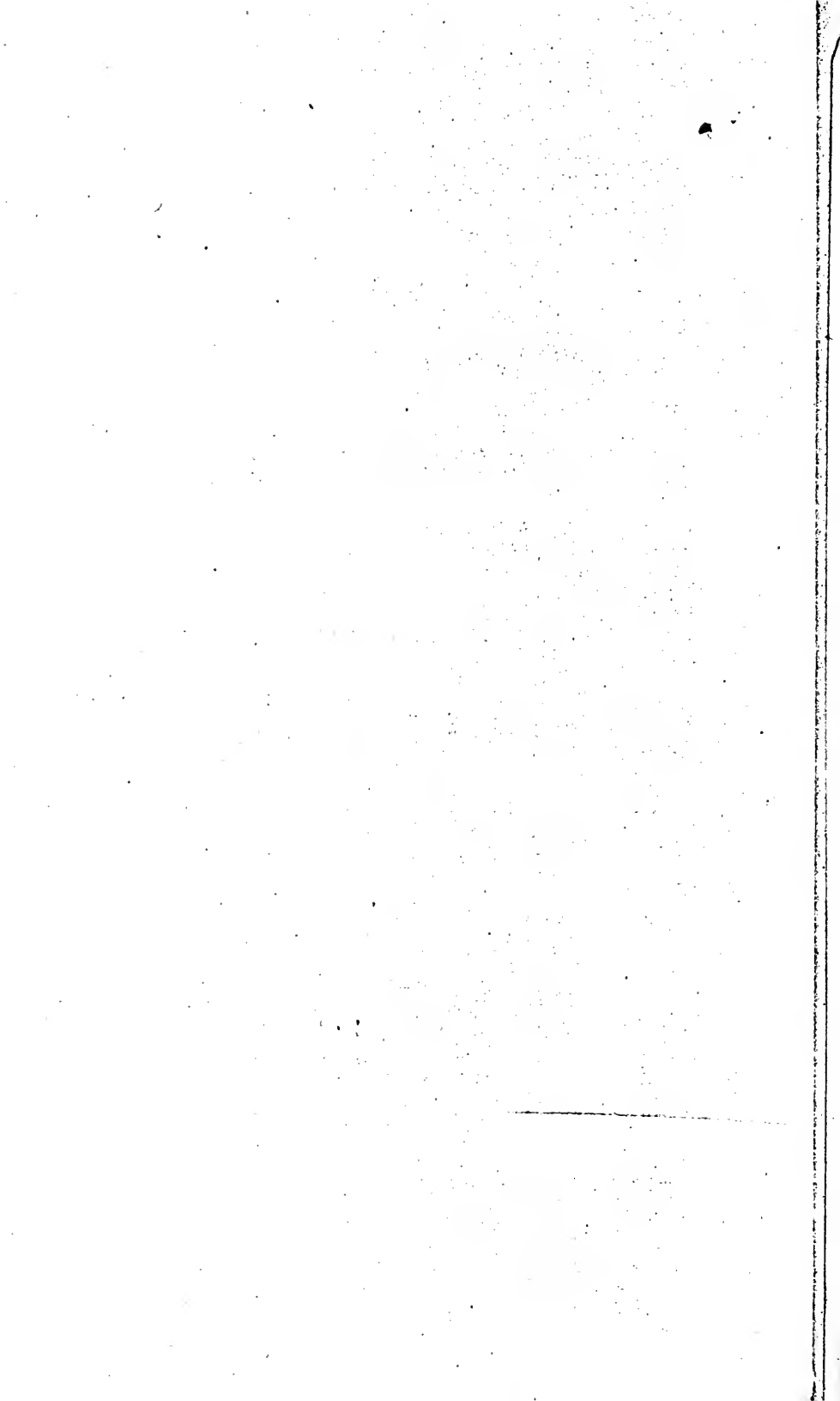
As it hath beene sundry times pub-
likely acted, by the Right Honoura-
ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his
seruants.

Written by William Shakespeare.



Printed by James Roberts, 1600.

[The above is a fac-simile of the title page of the first Quarto Edition of this play, printed in Shakspeare's lifetime].



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PREFACE

TO

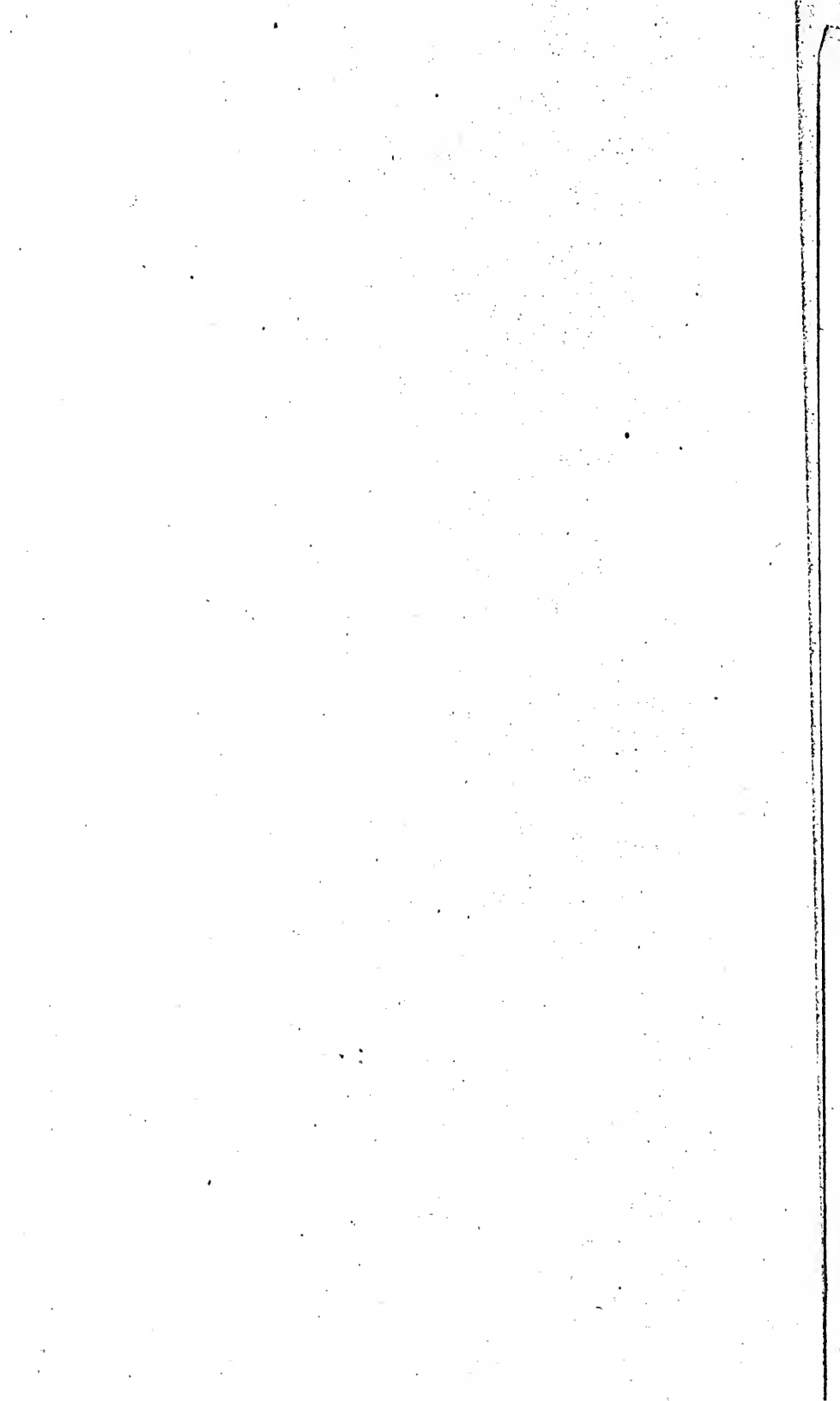
THE BOOK OF THE PLAY

OF

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

BY

WILLIAM WINTER.



P R E F A C E .

BECAUSE William Shakspeare, who lived in this world only fifty-two years, wrote so much within that brief period, and, furthermore, because he wrote with such transcendent genius and ability, it has pleased theoretical and visionary observers to declare that he never wrote at all. Shakspeare viewed alone, they maintain, is a miracle, and therefore an impossibility ; but Shakspeare and Francis Bacon, rolled into one, constitute a being who is entirely natural and authentic. The works of Shakspeare and the works of Bacon present, indeed, almost every possible point of dissimilarity, and no point of resemblance. The man behind Shakspeare's plays and poems and the man behind Bacon's essays and philosophy are absolutely distinct from one another, and as far apart as the poles. The direct and positive testimony of Shakspeare's friend and professional associate, Ben Jonson—a close observer, a stern critic, a truth-teller, a moralist, not over-amiable in his commentary upon human nature, and neither prone to error nor liable to credulity—tells the world, not only that Shakspeare wrote, but in what manner he wrote. The assumption, implied in the Bacon theory, that a poet capable of writing "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Lear," and "Othello," either would or could, for any reason whatsoever, wish to escape the imputation of their authorship, is obviously absurd. The idea that Shakspeare, hired by Bacon to father those plays, could for a period of years go in and out among the actors and the authors of his time, and so impose upon their sagacity and elude their jealous scrutiny as to keep the secret of this gigantic fraud, is simply ludicrous. The notion that the man who wrote Shakspeare's poems—and these, undeniably, were the work of William Shakspeare—was the kind of man to lend himself to any scheme of imposture is repudiated by every intimation of character that those poems contain ; and the same may rightfully be said of the man who wrote Shakspeare's plays. The fact that the plays, which these theorists would deny to Shakspeare's pen, are entirely, absolutely, and incontestibly kindred with the poems, which they cannot deny to it, stands forth as clear as the daylight. The associate fact that the plays contain precisely such errors as would naturally be made by the untutored Shakspeare, but could not possibly be made by the thoroughly taught and erudite Bacon, is likewise distinctly visible. Yet, all the same—because Shakspeare, like Burns,

PREFACE.

sprung from a family in humble station, and was but poorly schooled—this preposterous doctrine persistently rears its foolish head, and insults with idle chatter the Shakspearean scholarship of the world. Only a few weeks ago a prominent representative dramatist of the day had the astounding folly to announce an hypothesis—apparently intended to be taken in earnest—that Shakspeare's tragedy of "Hamlet" was written by Jonson, Webster, Dekker, and Alleyn, in conjunction with Shakspeare, and under his supervision; a doctrine which, to any student acquainted with those writers and their times, is pitiable in its silliness. For if there be in literature any work which, from the first line to the last, and in every word and syllable of it, bears the authentic pressure of one creative and predominant mind—the broad-headed arrow of imperial dominion—that work is "Hamlet." Shakspeare's style, once known, can never be mistaken. No man of his time, with the single exception of John Fletcher, could write in anything like his peculiar strain of simplicity and power. In some of the historical plays there are traces of collaboration—as all readers know; but in his greater plays the only hand that is visible is the hand of Shakspeare.

This is especially true of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and probably no better mental exercise than the analysis of the style and spirit and component elements of this piece could be devised for those persons—if any such there be—who incline to entertain either the Bacon theory or the collaboration theory of the authorship of Shakspeare. Bacon, if his avowed writings may be taken as the denotement of his mind, could no more have written this play than he could have flown on wings of tissue-paper over the spire of old St. Paul's; nor does it exhibit the slightest deviation from one invariable poetic mind and temperament. Shakspeare's fancy takes a free range here, and revels in beauty and joy. The Dream was first published in 1600; the earliest allusion made to it is that of Francis Meres, in his "Palladis Tamia," in 1598; and probably it was written as early as 1594, when Shakspeare was thirty years old. A significant reference to the subject of it occurs in the second scene of the second act of the "Comedy of Errors" (1589-91), which has been thought to indicate that the poet had already considered and, perhaps, conceived it: he was working with wise and incessant industry at that time, and the amazing fertility of his creative genius was beginning to reveal itself. The Dream is absolutely of his own invention. The names of the characters, together with a few incidents, he derived from Plutarch, Ovid, and Chaucer—authors with whom he shows himself to have been acquainted. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe occurs in Ovid, and a translation of that Latin poet, made by Arthur Golding, was current in Shakspeare's day. It is thought that the "Knight's Tale" and "Tysbe of Babylone," by Chaucer, may have been the means of suggesting this play to Shakspeare, but his story and his characters are his own. And although, as

PREFACE.

Dr. Johnson observes, fairies were in his time fashionable, and Spenser's poem ("The Faerie Queene") had made them great, Shakspeare was the first to interblend them with the proceedings of mortals in a drama. The text of this piece is considered to be exceptionally free from error or any sort of defect. Two editions of the *Dream*, quarto, appeared in 1600—one published by Thomas Fisher, bookseller; the other by James Roberts, printer. The Fisher publication had been entered at Stationers' Hall, October 8th, that year, and probably it was sanctioned by the author. The two editions do not materially differ, and the modern Shakspearean editors have made a judicious use of both in their choice of the text. The play was not again printed until 1623, when it appeared in the first Folio.

The title-pages of the Fisher and the Roberts Quartos are given herewith, in fac-simile. It is not known which was first, or which was authorized. Each of these Quartos consists of 32 leaves. Neither of them distinguishes the acts or scenes. In the first Folio (1623) the *Dream* occupies 18 pages, from p. 145 to p. 162 inclusive, in the section devoted to comedies—the Acts, but not the Scenes, being distinguished. The editors of that Folio, Heminge and Condell, followed the text of the Roberts Quarto. The memory of one of the actors who appeared in the *Dream* in its earliest days is curiously preserved in a stage-direction, printed in the First Folio, in Act v. Sc. i.: "Tawyer with a trumpet." The piece, of course, appears in the later folios,—1632, 1664, and 1685. "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was popular in Shakspeare's own time. Mention of it, as impliedly a play in general knowledge and acceptance, was made by Taylor, the Water Poet, in 1622.

A piece called "The Fairy Queen," being Shakspeare's comedy, with music by Purcell, was published in London in 1692. It had been acted there at the Haymarket—the presentation being made with rich dresses, fine scenery, and elaborate mechanism. There is another old piece, called "The Merry-Conceited Humours of Bottom the Weaver." This was made out of an episode in the *Dream*, and it is included in the collection of farces attributed to Robert Cox, a comedian of the time of Charles the First, published in 1672. A comic masque, by Richard Leveridge, similarly derived, entitled "Pyramus and Thisbe," was performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, and was published in 1716. Two other musical farces, with this same title and origin, are recorded—one by Mr. Lampe, acted at Covent Garden, and published in 1745; the other by W. C. Oulton, acted at Birmingham, and published in 1798. Garrick made an acting-copy of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"—adding to the text as well as curtailing it, and introducing songs—and this was played at Drury Lane, where it failed, and was published in 1763. Colman reduced Garrick's piece to two acts, and called it "A Fairy Tale," and in this form it was tried at Drury Lane, and published in 1764 and 1777. Colman, however, wrote:

PREFACE.

"I was little more than a godfather on the occasion, and the alterations should have been subscribed *Anon.*"

The best production of this comedy ever accomplished on the English stage was that effected by Charles Kean, at the Princess's Theatre, London,—managed by him from August, 1850, till August 29, 1859.

The first performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" ever given in America occurred at the old Park Theatre, for the benefit of Mrs. Hilson, on November 9, 1826. Mr. Ireland, in his valuable Records, has preserved a part of the cast, rescued from a mutilated copy of the play-bill of that night: *Theseus*, Mr. Lee; *Bottom*, Mr. Hilson; *Snout*, Mr. Placide; *Oberon*, Mr. Peter Richings; *Puck*, Mrs. Hilson; *Titania*, Mrs. Sharpe; *Hippolita*, Mrs. Stickney; *Hermia*, Mrs. Hackett. On August 30, 1841, the comedy was again revived at this theatre, with a cast that included Mr. Fredericks as *Theseus*, Mr. W. H. Williams as *Bottom*, Mrs. Knight as *Puck*, Charlotte Cushman as *Oberon*, Mary Taylor as *Titania*, Susan Cushman as *Helena*, Mrs. Groves as *Hippolita*, Miss Buloid (afterward Mrs. Abbott), as *Hermia*, William Wheatley as *Lysander*, C. W. Clarke as *Demetrius*, Mr. Bellamy as *Egeus*, and Mr. Fisher (not Charles), as *Quince*. It kept the stage only one week. The next revivals came on February 3 and 6, 1854, at Burton's Theatre and at the Broadway Theatre, rival houses. The parts were cast as follows:

	<i>At Broadway.</i>	<i>At Burton's.</i>
Theseus.....	F. B. Conway.....	Charles Fisher.
Lysander	Lannergan.....	George Jordan.
Demetrius.....	Grosvenor.....	W. H. Norton.
Egeus.....	Matthews	Moore.
Bottom	William Davidge.....	W. E. Burton.
Quince.....	Howard.....	T. Johnston.
Flute.....	Whiting.....	G. Barrett.
Snug.....	Fisk	Russell.
Snout.....	Henry	G. Andrews.
Starveling.....	Cutter	Paul.
Puck.....	Miss Viola Crocker.....	Mast. Parsloe.
Oberon.....	Mme. Ponisi.....	Miss E. Raymond.
Titania.....	Mrs. Abbott.....	Mrs. Burton.
Hippolita	Mrs. Warren.....	Mrs. J. Cooke.
Hermia	Mrs. Nagle.....	Mrs. Hough.
Helena.....	Miss A. Gougenheim	Mrs. Buckland.

Great stress, in both cases, was laid upon Mendelssohn's music. At each house it ran for a month. It was not revived in New York again until April 18, 1859, when Laura Keane brought it forward at her theatre, and kept it on till May 28th, with C. W. Couldock as *Theseus*, William Rufus Blake as *Bottom*, Miss Macarthy as *Oberon*, Miss Stevens, as *Helena*, Miss Ada Clifton as *Hermia*, and herself as *Puck*. It was a failure. Even Blake failed as *Bottom*—the most acute critic of that period (Ed-

PREFACE.

ward G. P. Wilkins), describing the performance as "not funny, not even grotesque, but vulgar and unpleasant." Charles Peters was good as *Thisbe*. The stage-version used was made by R. G. White. This same theatre subsequently became the Olympic (not Mitchell's, but the second of that name), and here, on October 28, 1867, under the management of Mr. James E. Hayes and the direction of Joseph Jefferson, who had brought over from London a fine Grecian panorama by Telbin, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was again offered, with a cast that included G. L. Fox as *Bottom*, W. Davidge as *Quince*, Owen Marlowe as *Flute*, Cornelia Jefferson as *Titania*, Clara Fisher as *Peasblossom*, Miss Fanny Stockton as *Oberon*, Miss Alice Harrison as a *Fairy*, Master Willie Young as *Puck*, Mr. Harry Wall as *Theseus*, Mr. J. J. Wallace as *Demetrius*, Mr. J. Franks as *Lysander*, Mr. T. J. Hind as *Egeus*, Mrs. Edmonds as *Hippolita*, Mrs. Wallace as *Hermia*, Miss Louisa Hawthorne as *Helena*, Mr. M. Quinlan as *Stout*, Mr. C. K. Fox as *Snug*, Mr. J. B. Howland as *Starveling*, and Miss Vincent, Miss Howard, Miss Thomas, and Miss Le Brun as *Fairies*. Telbin's panorama, a magnificent work, displayed the country supposed to lie between Athens and the forest wherein the Fairy Queen and the lovers are enchanted and bewitched and the sapient *Bottom* is "translated." Fox undertook *Bottom*, for the first time, and he was drolly consequential and stolidly conceited in it. Landseer's famous picture of *Titania* and the ass-headed *Bottom* was well copied, in one of the scenes. Mr. Hayes provided a gorgeous tableau at the close. Mendelssohn's music was played and sung, with excellent skill and effect—the chief vocalist being Clara Fisher. Owen Marlowe, as *Thisbe*, gave a burlesque of the manner of Rachel. The comedy, as then given, ran for one hundred nights—from October 28, 1867, till February 1, 1868. The stage version used was that of Charles Kean.

The next production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was effected by Augustin Daly at the Grand Opera House, on August 19, 1873. The scenery then employed, especially a woodland painted by Mr. G. Heister, was of extraordinary beauty—delicate in color, sensuous in feeling, sprightly in fancy. Mr. Fox again played *Bottom*; Miss Fanny Kemp Bowler appeared as *Oberon*, Miss Fay Templeton as *Puck*, Miss Fanny Hayward (Stocqueler) as *Titania*, Miss Nina Varian as *Helena*, Miss Adelaide Lennox as *Hermia*, Miss M. Chambers as *Hippolita*, Mr. M. A. Kennedy as *Theseus*, Mr. D. H. Harkins as *Lysander*, Mr. James Taylor as *Demetrius*, and Mr. Frank Hardenburgh as *Egeus*. The piece ran three weeks.

The attentive reader of this stage-version, made by Mr. Daly, will observe that much illustrative stage-business has been introduced by him, which is new and effective. The disposition of the groups at the start is fresh, and so is the treatment of the quarrel between *Oberon* and *Titania*, with disappearance of the Indian child. The moonlight effects, in the

PREFACE.

transition from act second to act third, and the gradual assembly of goblins and fairies in the shadowy mists through which the fire-flies glimmer, at the close of act third, are novel and beautiful. Cuts and transpositions have been made at the end of the fourth act, in order to close it with the voyage of the barge of *Theseus*, through a summer landscape, on the silver stream that ripples down to Athens. The third act has been judiciously compressed, so that the spectator may not see too much of the perplexed and wrangling lovers. Only a few changes have been made, and those only such as are absolutely essential. But little of the original text has been omitted. The music for the choruses has been selected from various English composers: that of Mendelssohn is used only in the orchestra. It is upon the strength of the comedy, and not upon the incidental music, that reliance has been placed, in effecting this revival. The accepted doctrine of traditional criticism—a doctrine made seemingly potent by reiteration—that “*A Midsummer Night's Dream*” is not for the stage, need not necessarily be considered final. Hazlitt was the first to insist on that idea. “Poetry and the stage,” said that great writer, “do not agree well together. The attempt to reconcile them, in this instance, fails not only of effect, but of decorum. The ideal can have no place upon the stage, which is a picture without perspective. The imagination cannot sufficiently qualify the actual impression of the senses.” But this is only saying that there are difficulties. The remark applies to all the higher forms of dramatic literature; and, logically, if this doctrine were observed in practice, none of the great plays would be attempted. “*A Midsummer Night's Dream*,” with all its ideal spirit, is essentially dramatic; it ought not to be lost to the stage; and to some extent, certainly, the difficulties can be surmounted. In the spirit of a dream the play was written, and in the spirit of a dream it can be acted.

The student of “*A Midsummer Night's Dream*,” as often as he thinks upon this lofty and lovely expression of a most luxuriant and happy poetic fancy, must necessarily find himself impressed with its exquisite purity of spirit, its affluence of invention, its extraordinary wealth of contrasted characters, its absolute symmetry of form, and its great beauty of poetic diction. The essential, wholesome cleanliness and sweetness of Shakspeare's mind, unaffected by the gross animalism of his times, appear conspicuously in this play. No single trait of the piece impresses the reader more agreeably than its frank display of the spontaneous, natural, and entirely delightful exultation of *Theseus* and *Hippolita* in their approaching nuptials. They are grand creatures both, and they rejoice in each other and in their perfectly accordant love. Nowhere in Shakspeare is there a more imperial man than *Theseus*; nor, despite her feminine impatience of dulness, a woman more beautiful and more essentially woman-like than *Hippolita*. It is thought that the immediate

PREFACE.

impulse of this comedy, in Shakspeare's mind, was the marriage of his friend and benefactor, the Earl of Southampton, with Elizabeth Vernon—which, while it did not in fact occur till 1598, was very likely agreed upon, and had received Queen Elizabeth's sanction, as early as 1594-95. In old English literature it is seen that such a theme often proved suggestive of ribaldry; but Shakspeare could preserve the sanctity even while he revelled in the passionate ardor of love, and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," while it possesses all the rosy glow, the physical thrill, and the melting tenderness of such pieces as Herrick's "Nuptiall Song," is likewise fraught with all the moral elevation and unaffected chastity of such pieces as Milton's "Comus." Human nature is shown in it as feeling no shame in its elemental and rightful passions, and as having no reason to feel ashamed of them. The atmosphere is free and bracing; the tone honest; the note true. Then, likewise, the fertility and felicity of the poet's invention—intertwining the loves of earthly sovereigns and of their subjects with the disensions of fairy monarchs, the pranks of mischievous elves, the protective care of attendant sprites, and the comic but kind-hearted and well-meant fealty of boorish peasants—arouse lively interest and keep it steadily alert. In no other of his works has Shakspeare more brilliantly shown that complete dominance of theme which is manifested in the perfect preservation of proportion. The strands of action are braided with astonishing grace. The fourfold story is never allowed to lapse into dullness or obscurity. There is caprice, but no distortion. The supernatural machinery is never wrested toward the production of startling or monstrous effects, but it deftly impels each mortal personage in the natural line of human development. The dream-spirit is maintained throughout, and perhaps it is for this reason—that the poet was living and thinking and writing in the free, untrammelled world of his own spacious and airy imagination, and not in any definite sphere of this earth—that "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is so radically superior to the other comedies written by him at about the same period, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," "The Comedy of Errors," "Love's Labor's Lost," and "The Taming of the Shrew." His genius overflows in this piece, and the rich excess of it is seen in passages of the most exquisite poetry—such as the beautiful speeches of *Titania* and *Overon*, in the second act—over against which is set that triumph of humor, that immortal Interlude of "Pyramus and Thisbe," which is the father of all the burlesques in our language, and which, for freshness, pungency of apposite satire, and general applicability to the foible of self-love in human nature, and to ignorance and folly in human affairs, might have been written yesterday. The only faults in this play are a slight tinge of monotony in the third act, concerning the lovers in the wood, and an excess of rhymed passages in the text throughout. Shakspeare had not yet cast aside that custom of rhyme which was in vogue when he came first upon the scene. But these defects are trifles.

PREFACE.

The beauties overwhelm them. It would take many pages to enumerate and fitly to descant on the felicities of literature that we owe to this comedy—gems such as the famous passage on "the course of true love;" the regal picture of Queen Elizabeth as "a fair vestal thronéd by the west;" the fine description of the stormy summer (that of 1594 in England, according to Stowe's Chronicle and Dr. Simon Forman's Diary); the vision of *Titania* asleep upon the bank of wild thyme, oxlips, and violets; the eloquent contrasts of lover, madman, and poet, each subdued and impelled by that "strong imagination" which "bodies forth the forms of things unknown;" and the wonderfully spirited lines on the hounds of Sparta, "with ears that swept away the morning dew." In character likewise, and in those salutary lessons which the truthful portraiture of character invariably teaches, this piece is exceptionally strong. *Helena*, noble and loving, yet a little perverted from true dignity by her sexual infatuation; *Hermia*, shrewish and violent, despite her feminine sweetness, and possibly because of her impetuous and clinging ardor; *Demetrius* and *Lysander*, each selfish and fierce in his love, but manly, straightforward fellows, abounding more in youth and desire than in brains; *Bottom*, the quintessence of bland, unconscious egotism and self-conceit; and *Theseus*, the princely gentleman and typical ruler—these make up, assuredly, one of the most interesting and significant groups that can be found in fiction. The self-centred nature, the broad-minded view, the magnanimous spirit, the calm adequacy, the fine and high manner of *Theseus*, make this character alone the inspiration of the comedy and a most potent lesson upon the conduct of life. Through certain of his people—such as *Ulysses* in "Troilus and Cressida," the *Duke* in "Measure for Measure," and *Prospero* in "The Tempest"—the voice of Shakspeare himself, speaking personally, is clearly heard; and it is heard also in *Theseus*. "The best in this kind are but shadows," says this wise observer of life, when he comes to speak of the actors who copy it, "and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them." There is no higher strain of princelike courtesy and considerate grace, even in the perfect breeding of *Hamlet*, than is visible in the preference of *Theseus* for the play of the hard-handed men of Athens:

"And what poor duty cannot do
Noble respect takes it in might, not merit.
For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it."

With reference to the question of suitable method in the acting of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," it may be observed that too much stress can scarcely be laid upon the fact that this comedy was conceived and written absolutely in the spirit of a dream. It ought not, therefore, to be treated as a rational manifestation of orderly design. It possesses, indeed,

PREFACE.

a coherent and symmetrical plot and a definite purpose; but, while it moves toward a final result of absolute order, it presupposes intermediary progress through a realm of motley shapes and fantastic vision. Its persons are creatures of the fancy, and all effort to make them solidly actual, to set them firmly upon the earth, and to accept them as realities of common life, is labor ill-bestowed.

The German Shakspearean commentator Ulrici—who commonly has an excess of theory and errs by explaining too much—has made certain observations upon this comedy which are exceptionally helpful toward a clear view of Shakspeare's drift. "It is the comic view of things," says this writer, "that forms the basis of the whole piece. . . . Not merely in particular cases do the maddest tricks of accident, as well as of human caprice, perversity, and folly, destroy each other in turn, but, generally, the principal pursuits and provinces of life are made to parody and paralyze each other. . . . The particular modification of the general comic view, which results from this ironical parodying of all the domains of life, at once determines and gives expression to the special ground-idea which first reduces the whole into organic unity. Life is throughout regarded in the light of a midsummer night's dream. . . . Life appears in travesty. . . . The mind seems to have lost its self-consciousness, while all the other faculties, such as feeling and fancy, wit and humor, are allowed the fullest scope and license. . . . Generally the characters are drawn in keeping with the pervading idea, with a few fine touches, and without depth of shade, in a vanishing chiaro-scuro. . . . Every character is pervaded by and represents the general idea, that the individual, in and by himself, is as nothing, and without importance except as a moment in the development of the whole."

To body forth the form of things is, in this case, manifestly, a difficult task: and yet the true course is obvious. Actors who yield themselves to the spirit of whim, and drift along with it, using a delicate method and avoiding insistence upon prosy realism, will succeed with this piece—provided, also, that their audience can be fanciful, and can accept the performance, not as a comedy of ordinary life, but as a vision seen in a dream. The play is full of intimations that this was Shakspeare's mood. Even *Bottom*, the consummate flower of unconscious humor, is at his height of significance in his moment of supreme illusion: "I have had a dream,—past the wit of man to say what dream it was:—Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had— But man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was." The whole philosophy of the subject, comically stated,

PREFACE.

is here. A serious statement of it is in the words of the poet Campbell:

" Well may sleep present us fictions,
Since our waking moments teem
With such fanciful convictions
As make life itself a dream."

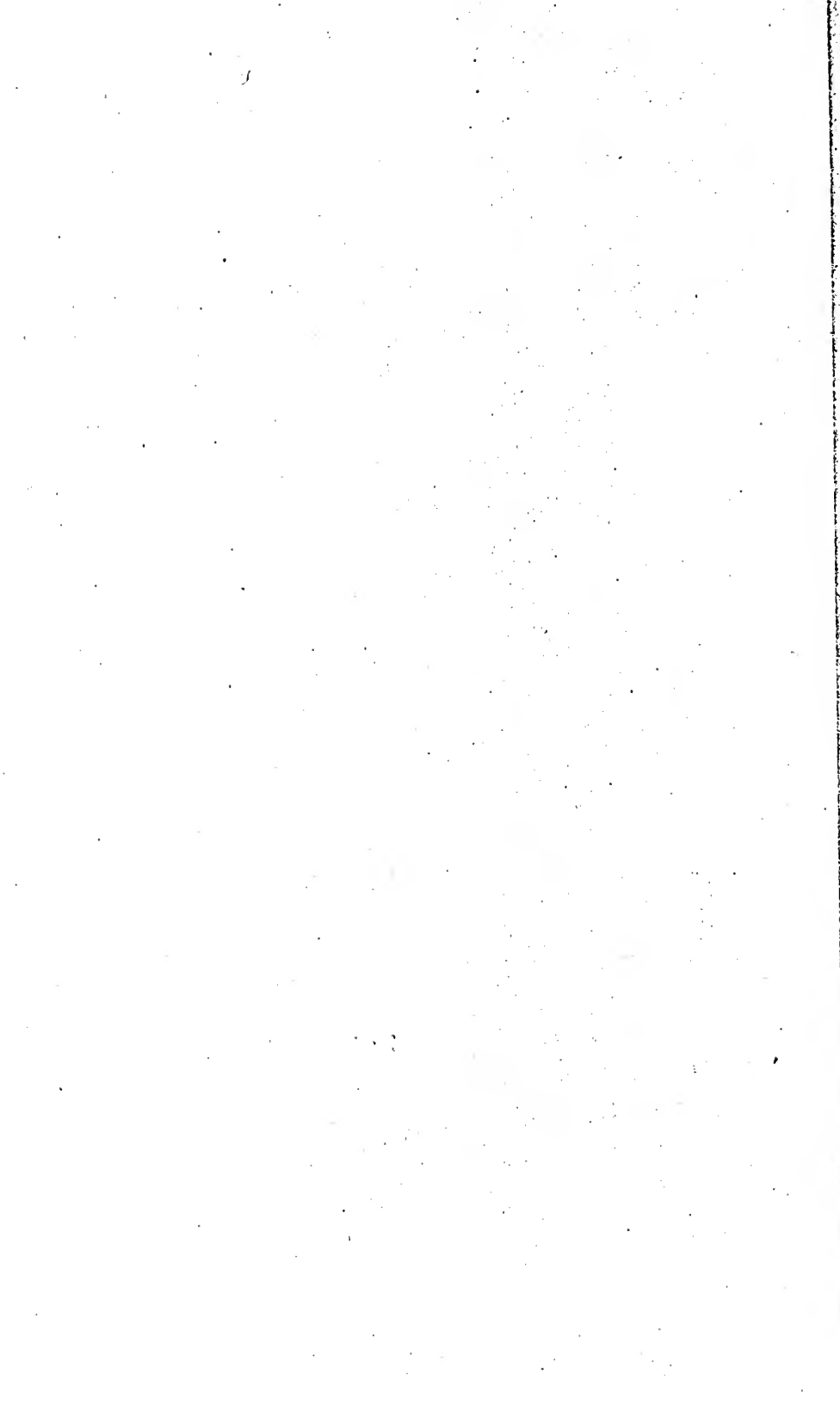
Various actors in the past—although "A Midsummer Night's Dream" has not had great currency upon the stage, at any period, whether in England or America—have laid a marked stress upon the character of *Bottom*. Samuel Phelps, upon the London stage, was esteemed excellent in it. He acted the part in his own production of the Dream, at Sadler's Wells, and he again acted it in 1870 at the Queen's Theatre, in Long Acre—now demolished. On the American stage, William E. Burton was accounted wonderfully good in it. "As Mr. Burton renders the character," says Richard Grant White, "its traits are brought out with a delicate and masterly hand; its humor is exquisite." And Mr. William L. Keese, in his careful and very serviceable biography of Burton, makes equally cordial reference to this achievement of the great comedian: "How striking it was in sustained individuality, and how finely exemplified was the potential vanity of *Bottom*! What pleased us greatly was the vein of engaging raillery which ran through the delivery of his speeches to the fairies." Burton produced the Dream at his own theatre, in 1854, with such wealth of fine scenery as in those days was accounted prodigious. The most notable impersonation of *Bottom* that has been given here since Burton's time was, probably, that of the late George L. Fox—already mentioned in this preface. Self-conceit, as the essence of the character, was thoroughly well understood and expressed by him. He wore the ass's head, but he did not know that he was wearing it; and when, afterward, the vague sense of it came upon him for an instant, he put it by as something inconceivable and intolerable. His "Not a word of me!"—spoken to the other hard-handed men of Athens, after his return to them out of the enchanted "palace wood"—was, perhaps, his finest single point. Certainly it expressed to the utmost the colossal self-love and swelling pomposity of this miracle of bland and opaque sapience. But Fox was stronger in pantomime than in a consistent character of sustained comedy. The essential need of acting, in a portrayal of this play, is whimsicality—but it must be whimsicality exalted by poetry.


[WILLIAM WINTER.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

CAST OF THE CHARACTERS.

	Cast of First Perf. in America, Nov. 9, 1856, Park Theatre.	Cast of Daily's Theatre, January 3, 1868.
THESEUS, Duke of Athens.....	MR. LEE.....	JOSEPH HOLLAND.
EGEUS, father to HERMIA.....	.....	CHARLES FISHER.
LYSANDER, in love with HERMIA.....	.....	OTIS SKINNER.
DEMETRIUS, beloved of HELENA.....	.....	JOHN DREW.
PHILOSTRATE, master of the sports to THESEUS.....	.....	EUGENE ORMOND.
QUINCE, the carpenter, also representing PROLOGUE.....	.....	CHARLES LECLERCO.
SNUG, the joiner, who represents also LION.....	.....	FREDERICK BOND.
BOTTOM, the weaver, who likewise represents PYRAMUS.....	MR. HILSON.....	JAMES LEWIS.
FLUTE, the bellows-mender, who also represents THISBE.....	.....	WILLIAM GILBERT.
SNOUT, the tinker, representing WALL in the interlude.....	MR. PLACIDE.....	JOHN WOOD.
STARVELING, the tailor; also representing in the interlude MOONSHINE.....	.....	EDWARD WILKES.
HIPPOLITA, Queen of the AMAZONS, betrothed to THESEUS.....	MRS. STICKNEY.....	PIERRE RUSSELL.
HELENA.....	.....	ADA REIAN.
HERMIA.....	MRS. HACKETT.....	VIRGINIA DREHER.
OBERON, King of the fairies.....	.....	ALICE HOOD.
TITANIA, Queen of the fairies.....	MRS. RICHINGS.....	EFFIE SHANNON.
A fairy attending on TITANIA.....	MRS. SHARPE.....	LIZZIE ST. QUENTIN.
PUCK, or ROBIN GOODFELLOW, a fairy attending on OBERON.....	MRS. HILSON.....	BIJOU FERNANDEZ.
PEAS-BLOSSOM, } fairies at the command of TITANIA.....	.....	AUGUSTE SCHULKE.
COBWEB, } MOTH, } MUSTARD-SEED, }	.....	MAMIE O'BRIEN.
.....	.....	ANNE O'BRIEN.
.....	.....	MASTER YORER.
.....	.....	MISSES SEARS, CONRON, COOKE, CUSHMAN, VIS- LAIRE, FERRELL, HEIM, BOWNE, PAGE, WHAR- TON, STACY, and GAUNT.
Other fairies attending OBERON and TITANIA.....	.....	MISSES LEE, BERNER, CAL- LARD, CONLEY, RAD- CLIFF, COLLIER, and QUANTAIN; MESSRS. RE- VELL, REGLID, MURPHY, IRETON, and FINSEY.
Attendants upon THESEUS and HIPPOLYTA.....	.....	.....

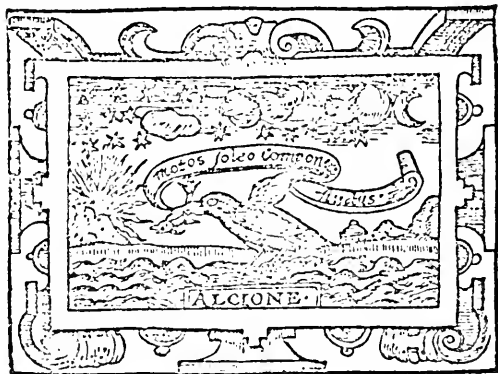




A
Midfommer nights
dreame.

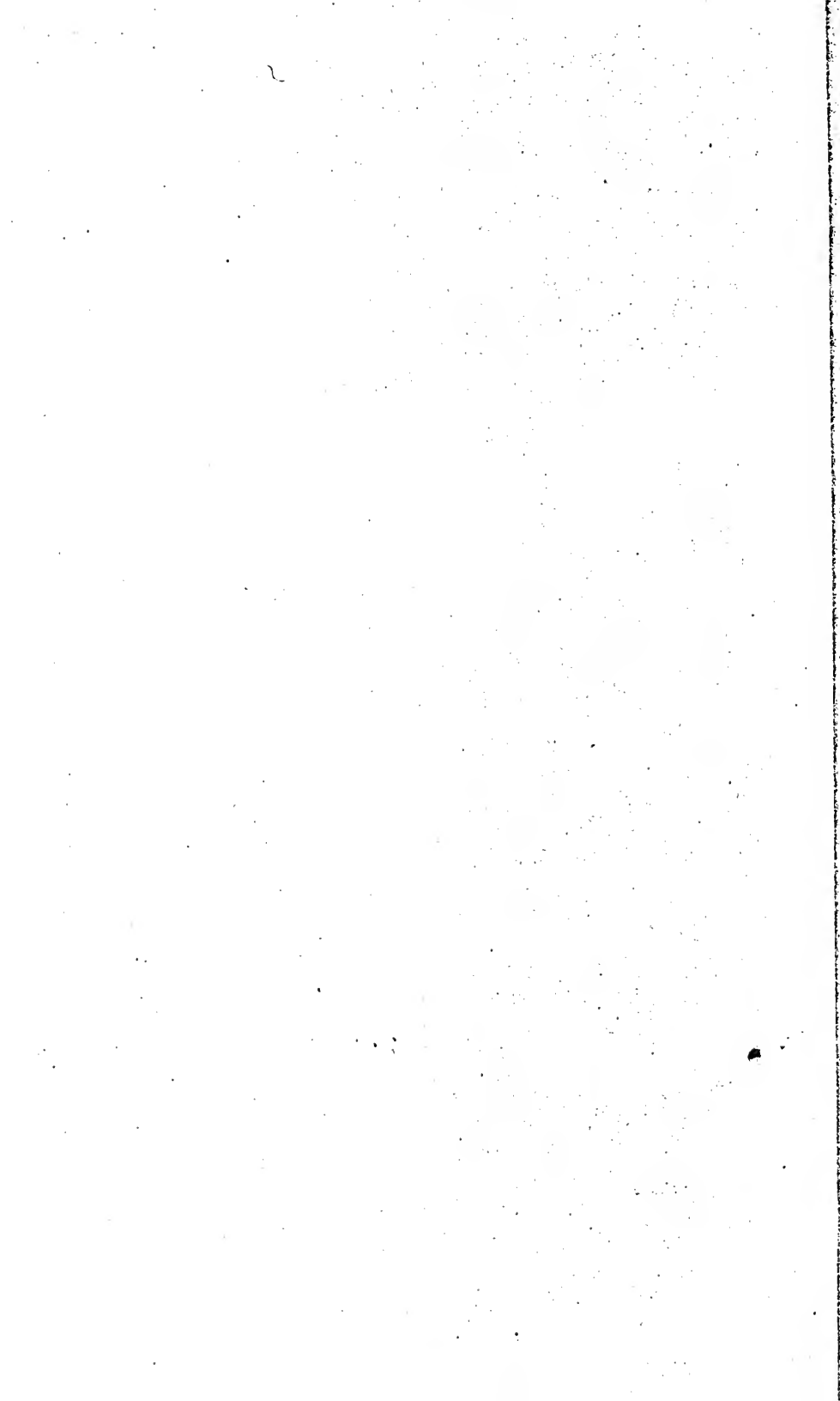
As it hath bene sundry times pub-
lickely acted, by the Right honoura-
ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his
servants.

Written by William Shakespeare.



Imprinted at London, for *Thomas Fisher*, and are to
be soude at his shoppe, at the Signe of the White Hart,
in Fleetstreet. 1600.

[The above is a facsimile of the title page of a reprint of the first Quarto
Edition of the play.]



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

ACT I.

SCENE.—THE PALACE OF THESEUS, AT ATHENS. *At the rise of the curtain, to melodious strains, certain nobles are discovered in various groups about the scene. PHILOSTRATE, with some ladies of the Amazon Court, are at the R. They all bow profoundly as THESEUS and HIPPOLITA enter, conversing, from L., and come forward, C.*

The. Now, fair Hippolita, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace ; four happy days bring in
Another moon : but, oh, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes ! she lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame, or a dowager,
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

Hip. Four days will quickly steep themselves in nights ;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time ;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.

The. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments ;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth ;
Turn melancholy forth to funerals,
The pale companion is not for our pomp.

[*Exit PHILOSTRATE.*

Hippolita, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love, doing thee injuries ;

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

[He leads her to a lounge at R., where the women of her court surround her. He reclines beside her. Music, which is interrupted by entrance of EGEUS and HERMIA from L. LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS follow.]

Ege. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!

[He kneels. The others also kneel, but rise immediately.]

The. Thanks, good Egeus. What's the news with thee?

Ege. Full of vexation come I, with complaint

Against my child, my daughter Hermia:

Stand forth, Demetrius. *[He rises.]* My noble lord,

This man hath my consent to marry her.—

Stand forth, Lysander:—and, my gracious duke,

This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child:

[He crosses to LYSANDER.]

Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,

And interchang'd love-tokens with my child:

Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,

With feigning voice, verses of feigning love;

With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart;

Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,

To stubborn harshness. *[Returning to THESEUS.]* And, my
gracious duke,

Be it so, she will not here before your grace

Consent to marry with Demetrius,

I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,

As she is mine, I may dispose of her:

Which shall be either to this gentleman,

Or to her death; according to our law,

Immediately provided in that case.

The. What say you, Hermia? be advis'd, fair maid:

To you your father should be as a god;

Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Her. So is Lysander.

The. In himself he is.

But, in this kind, wanting your father's voice,

The other must be held the worthier.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Her. I would my father look'd but with my eyes !

The. Rather, your eyes must with his judgment look.

Her. I do entreat your grace to pardon me. [Kneeling.]

I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may concern my modesty,
In such a presence here, to plead my thoughts :
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

The. [Rising.] Either to die the death, or to abjure
For ever the society of men. [Advancing to her, as she rises.]
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun ;
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
Thrice blessed they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage :
But earthly happier is the rose distill'd,
Than that, which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

Her. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my maiden heart and vow
Unto his lordship, whose unwish'd yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

The. Take time to pause ; and, by the next new moon,
[Returning to HIPPOLITA.]

(The sealing-day betwixt my love and me,
For everlasting bond of fellowship,
Upon that day either prepare to die,
For disobedience to your father's will ;
Or else, to wed Demetrius, as he would ;
Or on Diana's altar to protest,
For aye, austerity and single life.

[Sits and converses with HIPPOLITA.]

Dem. Relent, sweet Hermia ; and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Lys. You have her father's love, Demetrius ;
Let me have Hermia's : do you marry him.

Ege. Scornful Lysander ! true, he hath my love ;
And what is mine my love shall render him ;
And she is mine ; and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.

[LYSANDER *passes* EGEUS and *addresses* THESEUS.

Lys. I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
As well possess'd ; my love is more than his ;
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia :
Why should not I then prosecute my right ?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul ; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

The. I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof,
But, being over-full of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it.

[*Rises and comes forward.*

But, Demetrius, come ;

And come, Egeus ; you shall go with me,
I have some private schooling for you both.
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will ;
Or else the law of Athens yields you up
To death, or to a vow of single life.
Come, my Hippolita ;
Demetrius, and Egeus, go along :
I must employ you in some business
Against our nuptial ; and confer with you
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

Ege. With duty and desire, we follow you.

[*Exeunt* THESEUS, HIPPOLITA, EGEUS, DEMETRIUS,
and Court, R.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Lys. How now, my love? Why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

Her. Belike for want of rain, which I could well
Betwixt them from the tempest of mine eyes.

Lys. Ah me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth:
Or if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it;
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say,—Behold!
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.

Her. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd,
It stands as an edict in destiny:
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross;
As due to love, as thoughts, and dreams, and sighs,
Wishes, and tears, poor fancy's followers.

Lys. A good persuasion; therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revenue, and she hath no child;
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
And she respects me as her only son.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee,
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee.

Her. My good Lysander!
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow;
By that which knitteth souls, and prospers loves;

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

By all the vows that ever men have broke,
In number more than ever women spoke ;—
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lys. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

HELENA *enters as if looking for them. They previously go aside. As HELENA sees them she starts with a pang, and HERMIA advances smilingly.*

Her. God speed fair Helena ! Whither away ?

Hel. Call you me fair ? that fair again unsay.

Demetrius loves you fair : O happy fair !
Your eyes are lode-stars ; and your tongue's sweet air,
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching ; O, were favour so,
Your words I'd catch, fair Hermia, ere I go,
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
Were the world mine, it would I give
To be to you transformed.

O, teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

Her. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

[Coquettishly.]

Hel. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill !

Her. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

[Turns from LYSANDER, pettishly, and crosses.]

Hel. O that my prayers could such affection move !

Her. The more I hate, the more he follows me.

Hel. The more I love, the more he hateth me.

Her. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

[LYSANDER kneels at her feet and kisses her hand.]

Hel. None, but your beauty ; would that fault were mine !

[Throws herself on seat and buries her head in her hands.]

Her. Take comfort, he no more shall see my face ;

Lysander and myself will fly this place.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Before the time I did Lysander see,
Seem'd Athens like a paradise to me :
O then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell !

Lys. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold :
To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold
Her silver visage in the wat'ry glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,
(A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,)
Through Athens' gates have we devis'd to steal.

Her. And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet :
And thence, from Athens, turn away our eyes,
To seek new friends and stranger companies.
Farewell, sweet playfellow, pray thou for us,
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius !—
Keep word, Lysander : we must starve our sight
From lovers' food, till morrow deep midnight.

[*Exit HERMIA, R. ; the music of lyres is heard outside.*]

Lys. I will, my Hermia.—Helena, adieu :
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you ! [Exit LYSANDER, L.]

Hel. How happy some o'er other-some can be !
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that ? Demetrius thinks not so ;
He will not know what all but he do know. [Sinks on seat, C.]
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath love's mind of any judgment taste,
Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste ;
And therefore is love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.
And ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
He hail'd down oaths, that he was only mine ;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt—
So he dissolved—and showers of oaths did melt.

[*Suddenly rises.*]

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight :
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her ; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense :
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight, thither and back again.

[Exit.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—AT PETER QUINCE'S HOUSE, IN ATHENS.

QUINCE *enters from the R., meeting* SNUG, *who enters from the L., followed at first by* SNOUT *and* STARVELING, *and afterward by* FLUTE *and* BOTTOM.

Quin. Is all our company here?

Snug. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

Quin. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

Star. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the names of the actors; and so grow to a point.

Quin. Marry, our play is—The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry.

Snug. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors, by the scroll: Masters, spread yourselves.

[*They range themselves in a semicircle about* QUINCE, *who is C.*]

Quin. Answer, as I call you.—Nick Bottom, the weaver.

[*BOTTOM enters from L., in a hurry.*]

Bot. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quin. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quin. A lover that kills himself most gallant for love.

Bot. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. Yet, my chief humor is for a

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

tyrant : I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split :

*The raging rocks,
With shivering shocks,
Shall break the locks
Of prison-gates,
And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far,
And make and mar
The foolish fates.*

This was lofty !—Now name the rest of the players.—This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein ; a lover is more condoling.

Quin. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Flu. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

Flu. What is Thisbe ? a wandering knight ?

Quin. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flu. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman ; I have a beard coming.

Quin. That's all one ; you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

Bot. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too : I'll speak in a monstrous little voice :—*Thisne, Thisne,—Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear ;—thy Thisbe dear !* and—*lady dear !*

Quin. No, no, you must play Pyramus ; and, Flute, you Thisbe.

Bot. Well, proceed.

[*Sulkily.*

Quin. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Star. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisbe's mother.—Tom Snout, the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You, Pyramus' father ; myself, Thisbe's father ;—Snug, the joiner, you, the lion's part :—and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written ? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Quin. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bot. Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, *Let him roar again, let him roar again.*

Quin. An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

All. Every mother's son.

Bot. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us; but I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus: for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man: a proper man as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely, gentleman-like man; therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

Bot. Well, I will undertake it.

Quin. Here, masters, are your parts: and I am to intreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night, and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse: for if we meet in the city we shall be dogg'd with company, and our devices known. In the mean time I will draw a bill of properties such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

Bot. We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect; adieu.

Quin. At the duke's oak we meet.

Bot. Enough. [*The rest are hurrying to get out past him: he stops them, to pass before them.*] Hold, or cut bowstrings.

[*Exeunt.*]

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

SCENE 2.—A WOOD NEAR ATHENS. *There is a hillock at C., beside a stream of water. Low, flower-covered rocks and banks are R. and L., near the front.*

Enter a FAIRY, plucking flowers. With her wand she switches at a mushroom-growth near C., and from it PUCK appears.

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

Fai. I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.

I must go seek some dew-drops here, *[Plucking flowers.]*
And hang a pearl on every cowslip's ear.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits, I'll be gone;
Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night;
Take heed, the queen come not within his sight,
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,
Because that she, as her attendant, hath
A lovely boy stol'n from an Indian king;
She never had so sweet a changeling;
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;
But she, perforce, withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.

Fai. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite,
Call'd Robin Goodfellow; are you not he,
That frights the maidens of the villagery;
Are not you he?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob,

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me ;
Then slip I from beneath, down topples she,
And then the whole quire hold their hips, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.—

But room, Faëry, here comes Oberon. [Looking to the R.

Fai. [Looking off L.] And here my mistress :—Would that
he were gone !

OBERON *and his train enter quite quickly from the R., but beholding the others, who appear at the L., he draws back and holds aloof for a moment until TITANIA enters, with her attendant fairies, who carry a canopy covering the Indian child, reclining on a silver couch.*

Obe. [Advancing.] Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

Tita. [Startled, and staying her train by a gesture.]

What, jealous Oberon ! Fairies, skip hence. [They make a move, all to the L., as if to fly.] I have forsworn his bed and company.

Obe. Tarry, rash wanton ; am not I thy lord ?

Tita. Why art thou here

Come from the farthest steep of India ?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskined lady and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded ; and you come
To give their union joy and prosperity.

Obe. How canst thou thus, for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolita,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus ?

Tita. These are the forgeries of jealousy :
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.

Obe. Why should Titania cross her Oberon ?

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.

[*He advances to the canopy. At a gesture from TITANIA the curtains are closed.*

Tita. Set your heart at rest,
The fairy land buys not the child of me.

[*OBERON orders his attendants to advance, and he dashes toward the couch to seize the child. He tears aside the curtains, and finds that it has disappeared.*

Tita. His mother was a votaress of my order :
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood ;
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die ;
And, for her sake, do I rear up her boy :
And, for her sake, I will not part with him.

[*Motions to the attendants, who carry the canopy away.*

Obc. How long within this wood intend you stay ?

Tita. Perchance, till after Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round,
And see our moonlight revels, go with us ;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

Obc. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

Tita. Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away :
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[*Excunt TITANIA and her Train.*

Obc. Well, go thy way : thou shalt not from this grove,
Till I torment thee for this injury :
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou remember'st
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song ;
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music.

Puck. I remember.

Obc. That very time I saw, (but thou couldst not,).

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal, thrond' by the west ;
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts :
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon ;
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell :
It fell upon a little western flower,—
Before, milk-white, now purple with love's wound,—
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower : the herb I shew'd thee once ;
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid,
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again,
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes. . . . [Exit PUCK, through the air.

Obc. Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes ;
The next thing then she waking looks upon,
(Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
She shall pursue it with the soul of love :
And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
(As I can take it with another herb,)
I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here ? I am invisible ;
And I will overhear their conference.

[Retires up and reclines upon a bank of flowers.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him.

Dem. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia ?

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.
Thou told'st me, they were stol'n unto this wood.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

Hel. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant :
But yet you draw not iron, for all my heart
Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

Dem. Do I entice you ? Do I speak you fair ?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you—I do not, nor I cannot, love you ?

Hel. And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel ; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you :
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me ; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you,
And to be used as you do use your dog.

Dem. I'll run from thee, and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

Hel. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will ; the story shall be chang'd ;
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase ;
The dove pursues the griffin ; the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger : bootless speed !
When cowardice pursues, and valor flies.

[*She clings to him.*

Dem. I will not stay thy questions ; [*Shakes her off.*] let
me go :

Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

Hel. Ay, in the temple, in the town, and field,
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius !
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex :
We cannot fight for love, as men may do ;
We should be woo'd, and were not made to woo.

[*She attempts to clasp his arm—he avoids her. Exit DEMETRIUS. HELENA sinks for a moment in grief, then starts up.*

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

I'll follow thee, and make a heaven of hell.

To die upon the hand I love so well. [Exit HELENA.

Obe. Fare thee well, nymph : ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.

Re-enter PUCK.

Hast thou the flower there ? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

Obe. I pray thee, give it me.

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows ;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine :
There sleeps Titania, sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight ;
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove,
A sweet Athenian lady : she's in love
With a disdainful youth : anoint his eyes ;
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care ; that he may prove
More fond on her, than she upon her love :
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.

[*Exeunt, different ways.*

Enter, from side of PUCK'S exit, LYSANDER and HERMIA,
PUCK creeps back after them and hides.

Lys. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the woods,
And, to speak troth, I have forgot our way ;
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Her. Be it so, Lysander, find you out a bed,
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Lys. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both ;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.

Her. Nay, good Lysander ; for my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.
So far be distant, and good night, sweet friend ;
Thy love ne'er alter, till thy sweet life end !

Lys. Amen, Amen, to that fair prayer say I,
And then end life, when I end loyalty !
Here is my bed : Sleep give thee all his rest !

Her. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd.

[*They sleep.* PUCK advances from his hiding place.

Puck. Night and silence ! who is here ?

Weeds of Athens he doth wear :

This is he my master said

Despised the Athenian maid ;

And here the maiden, sleeping sound,

On the dank and dirty ground.

Pretty soul, she durst not lie

Near this lack-love, this kill-court'sy.

Churl, upon thy eyes I throw

All the power this charm doth owe :

When thou wak'st, let love forbid

Sleep his seat on thy eyelid.

So awake, when I am gone ;

For I must now to Oberon.

[*Exit* PUCK.

Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running.

Hel. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

Dem. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Hel. O, wilt thou darkling leave me ? do not so.

Dem. Stay, on thy peril ; I alone will go.

[*Exit* DEMETRIUS.

Hel. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase !
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies,
For she hath blesséd and attractive eyes :

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

But who is here?—Lysander! on the ground!
Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound!—
Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lys. [*Waking.*] And run through fire I will, for thy sweet
sake,

Transparent Helena! Nature shows her art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Hel. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so:
What though he love your Hermia? Yet, what though?
Hermia still loves you: then be thou content.

Lys. Content with Hermia? No: I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia, but Helena, I love:
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
And leads me to your eyes; where I o'erlook
Love's stories, written in love's richest book.

Hel. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When, at your hands, did I deserve this scorn?
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo.
But fare you well: perforce I must confess,
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
O, that a lady, of one man refus'd,
Should of another therefore be abus'd! [*Exit.*]

Lys. She sees not Hermia;—Hermia, sleep thou there;
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!
And, all my powers, address your love and might,
To honour Helen, and to be her knight. [*Exit.*]

Her. [*Starting.*] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy
best,
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!

[*She rises and looks around.*]

Ah me, for pity!—what a dream was here!
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear!
Methought a serpent ate my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey:

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Lysander! what, removed! Lysander! lord!
What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?
Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;
Speak, of all loves; I swoon almost with fear.

[*Exit.*

[*The night deepens during the preceding scene. At the exit of HERMIA the new moon is seen to rise.*

Enter TITANIA, with her Train.

Tita. Come, now a roundel, and a fairy song;
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;
Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds:
Some, war with rear-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats; and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots and wonders
At our quaint spirits: sing me now asleep,
Then to your offices, and let me rest.

SONG.

I.

1. *Fai.* You spotted snakes, with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts, and blind-worms, do no wrong;
Come not near our fairy queen:

CHORUS.

Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby;
Never harm, nor spell, nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good-night, with lullaby.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

II.

2 *Fai.* Weaving spiders, come not here :
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence,
Beetles black, approach not near ;
Worm, nor snail, do no offence.

CHORUS.

Philomel, with melody, etc.

[*Exeunt* FAIRIES. TITANIA *sleeps.*

Enter OBERON.

Obe. What thou seest, when thou dost wake,
[*Squeezes the flower on TITANIA'S eyelids.*
Do it for thy true-love take ;
Love and languish for his sake ;
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear ;
Wake, when some vile thing is near. [Exit.
[*The curtain slowly falls when the moon reaches its height
and its rays fall on TITANIA. To the strain which
brings the curtain down, it slowly again ascends.*

ACT III.

SAME SCENE.—*The curtain rises, disclosing TITANIA still asleep on the bank, c. The moon is not in sight, but its rays still fall on the scene.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, FLUTE, SNOOT, STARVELING, and BOTTOM.

Bot. Are we all met ?

Quin. Pat, pat ; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house ; and we will do it in action, as we will do it before the duke.

Bot. Peter Quince,—

Quin. What say'st thou, bully Bottom ?

Bot. There are things in this comedy of *Pyramus and Thisbe* that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself ; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that ?

Snout. By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.

Star. I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

Bot. Not a whit ; I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue ; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords ; and that Pyramus is not killed indeed ; and, for the more better assurance, tell them, that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver : this will put them out of fear.

Quin. Well, we will have such a prologue.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion ?

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Star. I fear it, I promise you.

Bot. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in, God shield us! a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-foul than your lion, living; and we ought to look to 't.

Snout. Therefore, another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bot. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,—*Ladies, or, fair ladies, I would wish you, or, I would request you, or, I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are:* and there, indeed, let him name his name; and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

Quin. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber: for, you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

Snug. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bot. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quin. Yes, it doth shine that night.

[*After consulting a scroll.*]

Bot. Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber-window, where we play, open; and the moon may shine in at the casement.

Quin. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then there is another thing; we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snug. You can never bring in a wall.—What say you, Bottom?

Bot. Some man or other must present wall; and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast, about him, to signify wall; or let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Quin. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin : when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake ; and so every one according to his cue.

[*They sit about, some lying at full length.*]

Enter PUCK, *behind.*

Puck. What hempen homespuns have we swaggering here, So near the cradle of the fairy queen ? What, a play toward ? I'll be an auditor ; An actor, too, perhaps, if I see cause.

Quin. Speak, Pyramus :—*Thisbe*, stand forth.

Bot. [*As* PYRAMUS.] *Thisbe*, the flowers of odious savours sweet.

Quin. Odours, odours.

Bot. [*As* PYRAMUS.] —odours savours sweet :

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe, dear.

But, hark, a voice ! stay thou but here a while,

And by and by I will to thee appear. [*Exit to the R.*]

Puck. [*Aside.*] A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here !
[*Exit after* BOTTOM.]

Flu. Must I speak now ?

Quin. Ay, marry, must you : for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flu. [*As* THISBE.] *Most radiant Pyramus, most lily white of hue,*

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,

As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire,

I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

Quin. Ninus' tomb, man : why, you must not speak that yet ; that you answer to Pyramus : you speak all your part at once, cues and all.—Pyramus, enter ; your cue is past ; it is, never tire.

Re-enter PUCK, *and after him* BOTTOM *with an ass's head.*

Flu. [*As* THISBE.] O,—*As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.*

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Bot. [As PYRAMUS.] *If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine:—*

Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! help!

[*Exeunt all the players, in various ways.*]

Puck. I'll follow, I'll lead them about a round,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier.
[*Exit.*]

Bot. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.

Re-enter SNOUT.

Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

Bot. What do you see? you see an ass's-head of your own; do you?

Re-enter QUINCE.

Quin. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated.

[*Exeunt* SNOUT and QUINCE.]

Bot. I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear that I am not afraid. [Sings.]

The ousel-cock, so black of hue,

With orange-tawny bill,

The throstle with his note so true,

The wren with little quill:

Tita. [Waking.] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bot. The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,

The plain-song cuckoo gray,

Whose note full many a man doth mark,

And dares not answer, nay;—

Tita. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note,
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me,
On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Bot. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that : and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays. The more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not make them friends.

Tita. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bot. Not so, neither : but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

Tita. Out of this wood do not desire to go ;
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit, of no common rate ;
The summer still doth tend upon my state,
And I do love thee ; therefore, go with me ;
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee ;
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep, ?
And sing, while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep :
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.—
Peas-blossom ! Cobweb ! Moth ! and Mustard-seed !

[*The Goblins enter as each one is called by name.*

Peas. Ready.

Cob. And I.

Moth. And I.

Mus. And I.

All.

Where shall we go ?

[*All making obeisance.*

Tit. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman ;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;
Feed him with apricocks, and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries ;
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And, for night-tapers, crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise ;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes :
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Peas. Hail, mortal !

Cob. Hail !

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Moth. Hail!

Mus. Hail!

Bot. I cry your worships' mercy, heartily.—(To COBWEB.)
I beseech your worship's name.

Cob. Cobweb.

Bot. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good master
Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you.—
(To PEAS.) Your name, honest gentleman?

Peas. Peas-blossom.

Bot. I pray you, commend me to mistress Squash, your
mother, and to master Peas-cod, your father. Good master
Peas-blossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too.—
(To MUSTARD-SEED.) Your name, I beseech you, sir?

Mus. Mustard-seed.

Bot. Good master Mustard-seed, I know your patience
well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured
many a gentleman of your house: I promise you, your kindred
hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you of more
acquaintance, good master Mustard-seed.

Tita. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

[*They cast garlands of ferns and flowers about him and
lead him off—following TITANIA. After they go off,
R. I. E., OBERON appears at L., preceded by PUCK,
suppressing his laughter and pointing after the oth-
ers.*

Obe. How now, mad spirit?

What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.

While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play,
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented in their sport,
Forsook his scene, and enter'd in a brake:
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's nowl I fix'd on his head;

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

And forth my mimic comes : when they him spy,
Why, at his sight, away the fellows fly :
He murder cries, and help from Athens calls.
When in that moment (so it came to pass)
Titania wak'd, and straightway lov'd an ass.

Obe. This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do ?

Puck. I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too,—
And the Athenian woman by his side ;
That when he wak'd, of force she must be ey'd.

Enter DEMETRIUS and HERMIA.

Obe. Stand close ; this is the same Athenian.

Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.

Dem. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so ?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

Her. Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse ;
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Then kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day,
As he to me : would he have stol'n away
From sleeping Hermia ?

It cannot be, but thou hast murder'd him ;
So should a murderer look ; so dread, so grim.

Dem. So should the murder'd look ; and so should I,
Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty :
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

Her. What's this to my Lysander ? where is he ?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me ?

Dem. I'd rather give his carcase to my hounds.

Her. Out, dog ! out, cur ! thou driv'st me past the
bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then ?
Henceforth be never numbered among men !

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Dem. You spend your passion on a mispris'd mood :
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood ;
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

Her. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

Dem. An if I could, what should I get therefore ?

Her. A privilege, never to see me more.—

And from thy hated presence part I so :

See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

[*Exit.*

Dem. There is no following her in this fierce vein :

Here, therefore, for a while I will remain.

So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow

For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe ;

Which now, in some slight measure, it will pay,

If for his tender here I make some stay.

[*Lies down.*

Obe. What hast thou done ? Thou hast mistaken quite,

And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight :

About the wood go swifter than the wind,

And Helena of Athens look thou find ;

All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer

With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood dear.

By some illusion see thou bring her here ;

I'll charm his eyes against she doth appear.

Puck. I go, I go ; look, how I go ;

Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

[*Exit.*

Obe. Flower of this purple dye,

Hit with Cupid's archery,

Sink in apple of his eye ! [*Squeezes juice of flower.*

When his love he doth espy,

Let her shine as gloriously

As the Venus of the sky.

When thou wak'st, if she be by,

Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter PUCK.

Puck. Captain of our fairy band,

Helena is here at hand ;

And the youth mistook by me,

Pleading for a lover's fee ;

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

[*They retire aside.*]

Enter LYSANDER *and* HELENA.

Lys. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?

Scorn and derision never come in tears.

Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,

In their nativity all truth appears.

Hel. You do advance your cunning more and more.

These vows are Hermia's; will you give her o'er?

Lys. I had no judgment, when to her I swore,

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Dem. [*Awaking.*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show

Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!

Hel. O, spite! O, fury! I see you're all bent

To set against me, for your merriment.

Can you not hate me, as I know you do,

But you must join, in souls, to mock me too?

If you were men, as men you are in show,

You would not use a gentle lady so:

To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,

When, I am sure, you hate me with your hearts.

You both are rivals, and love Hermia,

And now both rivals, to mock Helena:

A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,

To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes

With your derision! None of noble sort

Would so offend a virgin; and extort

A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Lys. You are unkind, Demetrius: be not so:

For you love Hermia; this, you know, I know;

And here, with all good will, with all my heart,

In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love, and will do to my death.

Hel. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

Dem. Lysander, keep thy Hermia ; I will none :
If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd ;
And now to Helen is it home return'd,
There to remain.

Lys. Helen, it is not so.

Dem. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear.—
Look, where thy love comes ; yonder is thy dear.

Enter HERMIA.

Her. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found ;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so ?

Lys. Why should he stay whom love doth press to go ?

Her. What love could press Lysander from my side ?

Lys. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide ;
Fair Helena ; who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
Why seek'st thou me ? could not this make thee know
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so ?

Her. You speak not as you think, it cannot be.

Hel. Injurious Hermia ! most ungrateful maid !
Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd
To bait me with this foul derision ?
Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—O, and is all forgot ?
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence ?
So we grew together,

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted ;
But yet a union in partition,
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem :
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend ?

Her. I am amazed at your passionate words :
I scorn you not ; it seems that you scorn me.

Hel. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me, and praise my eyes and face ?
And made your other love, Demetrius,
(Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,)
To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,
Precious, celestial ? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates ? and wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent ?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate ;
But miserable most, to love unlov'd !
This you should pity, rather than despise.

Her. I understand not what you mean by this !

Hel. Ay, do, persèver, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up :
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But, fare you well : 'tis partly mine own fault,
Which death, or absence, soon shall remedy.

Lys. Stay, gentle Helena, hear my excuse ;
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena !

Hel. O, excellent !

Her. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Dem. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Lys. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat ;
Thy threats have no more strength, than her weak prayers. —
Helen, I love thee ; by my life, I do ;

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

Dem. I say I love thee more than he can do.

Lys. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

Dem. Quick, come,—

Her. Lysander, whereto tends all this?
[Clings to him.]

Lys. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose;
Or I will shake thee from me, like a serpent!

Her. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this,
Sweet love?

Lys. Thy love? out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! O, hated potion; hence!

Her. Do you not jest? [Again clinging to him.]

Hel. Yes, 'sooth; and so do you.

Lys. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Dem. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you; I'll not trust your word.

Lys. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

Her. What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me!
Since night, you lov'd me; yet, since night, you left me:
Why then you left me,—O, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?

Lys. Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore, be out of hope, of question, doubt,
Be certain, nothing truer, 'tis no jest,
That I do hate thee, and love Helena.

Her. O me! [to HEL.] you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night,
And stolen my love's heart from him? [Advancing on her.]

Hel. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me; I was never curst;
[Retreats behind the men.]

I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice; [HERMIA advances.]

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Let her not strike me.
Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you ;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood :
He follow'd you ; for love, I follow'd him.
But he hath chid me hence ; and threaten'd me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too :
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back,
And follow you no further. Let me go ;
You see how simple and how fond I am.

Her. Why, get you gone : who is't that hinders you ?

Hel. A foolish heart that I leave here behind.

Her. What, with Lysander ?

Hel.

With Demetrius.

Lys. Be not afraid : she shall not harm thee, Helena.

Dem. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

Hel. O when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd ;

She was a vixen, when she went to school.

Her. Why will you suffer her to flout me thus ?

Let me come to her. [LYSANDER *interposcs.*

Dem. [To him.] You are too officious.

Take not her part : for if thou dost intend

Never so little show of love to her,

Thou shalt aby it.

Lys. Now she holds me not ;

Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,

Or thine or mine, is most in Helena.

Dem. Follow ? nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[*Exeunt* LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS.]

Her. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you :

Nay, go not back.

Hel.

I will not trust you, I ;

Nor longer stay in your curst company.

[HERMIA *pursues and nearly overtakes her, and HELENA finally escapes and exits.*

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Her. I am amaz'd, and know not what to say.

[*Exit, pursuing HELENA.*]

Obe. [*Advances with PUCK.*] This is thy negligence : still
thou mistak'st,

Or else commit'st thy knaveries wilfully.

Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.

Did not you tell me, I should know the man

By the Athenian garments he had on ?

And so far blameless proves my enterprise,

That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes :

And so far am I glad it so did sort,

As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

Obe. Thou seest, these lovers seek a place to fight :

Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night ;

The starry welkin cover thou anon

With drooping fog as black as Acheron ;

And lead these testy rivals so astray,

As one come not within another's way.

Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,

Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong ;

And sometime rail thou like Demetrius ;

And from each other look thou lead them thus,

Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep

With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep :

Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye,

Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,

To take from thence all error, with his might,

And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.

Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,

I'll to my queen, and beg her Indian boy ;

And then I will her charmed eye release

From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste ;

[*The mists begin to fall, and the scene commences to darken.*]

For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,

And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger ;

At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Already to their wormy beds are gone ;
And wilfully themselves exile from light,
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

Obe. But we are spirits of another sort :
I with the morning's love have oft made sport ;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt-green streams.
But, notwithstanding, haste ; make no delay :
We may effect this business yet ere day. [Exit OBERON.]

Puck. Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down ;
I am fear'd in field and town ;
Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one.

Enter LYSANDER [below].

Lys. Where art thou, proud Demetrius ? speak thou now.

Puck. Here, villain ; drawn and ready. Where art thou ?

Lys. I will be with thee straight.

Puck. Follow me then,
To plainer ground. [Exit LYSANDER, as following the voice.]

Enter DEMETRIUS [above, from the same direction].

Dem. Lysander ! speak again. [Re-enter PUCK.]
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled ?
Speak—in some bush ? Where dost thou hide thy head ?

Puck. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come ? Come, recreant ; come, thou child ;
I'll whip thee with a rod : he is devil'd
That draws a sword on thee.

Dem. Yea ; art thou there ?

Puck. Follow my voice : we'll try no manhood here.

[Exeunt. The fog grows more dense.]

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Re-enter LYSANDER [*above*].

Lys. He goes before me, and still dares me on ;
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter heel'd than I.
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly ;
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. Come, thou gentle day ! [*Lies down.*
For if but once thou show me thy gray light ;
I'll find Demetrius, and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.*

Re-enter PUCK and DEMETRIUS [*below*].

Puck. Ho, ho, ho ! Coward, why com'st thou not ?

Dem. Abide me, if thou dar'st ; for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now ? [*Sits on a bank.*

Puck. Come hither ; I am here.

Dem. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt 'by this
dear,

If ever I thy face by daylight see :
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.
By day's approach look to be visited.

[*Lies down and sleeps. The scene becomes blacker.*

Enter HERMIA.

Her. Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbied with the dew, and torn with briers ;
I can no further crawl, nor further go,
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me, till the break of day.
Heaven shield Lysander, if they mean a fray ! [*Lies down.*

Puck. Yet but three ? Come one more ;
Two of both kinds make up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad :
Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Enter HELENA.

Hel. O, weary night! O, long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours: shine, comforts, from the east,
That I may back to Athens by daylight,
From these that my poor company detest:—
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company.

[Sleeps.]

[The light of fire-flies breaks through the darkness, and
the Goblins and Fairies begin to assemble in the mists.]

Spirits.

On the ground
Sleep thou sound:
We'll apply
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy.

Puck. [Squeezes the juice on LYSANDER'S eye.]

A fairy. [Sings.]

When thou wak'st,
Thou tak'st
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown:
Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill.

THE CURTAIN DESCENDS.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—A TANGLED WOOD AND GLEN. *TITANIA is discovered seated on a mound of flowers, at the base of a fallen tree. BOTTOM is beside her still wearing the ass's head. The four Goblins are behind. It is still dark and misty.*

Tita. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

Bot. Where's Peas-blossom?

Peas. Ready.

Bot. Scratch my head, Peas-blossom.—Where's monsieur Cobweb?

Cob. Ready.

Bot. Monsieur Cobweb; good monsieur, get you your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, monsieur; and, good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would be loth to have you over-flown with a honey-bag, signior. Where's monsieur Mustard-seed?

Mus. What's your will?

Bot. Nothing, good monsieur, but to help cavalero Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, monsieur; for, methinks, I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

Tita. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bot. I have a reasonable good ear in music; let us have the tongs and the bones.

Tita. Or say, sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Bot. Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

Tita. I have a venturous fairy that shall seek
The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.

Bot. I had rather have a handful, or two, of dried peas.
But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me;
I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

Tita. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away. [*Exeunt FAIRIES.*
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barked fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee! [*They sleep.*

OBERON *advances.* Enter PUCK.

Obc. Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight?
Her dotage now I do begin to pity:
For meeting her of late, behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her:
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
When I had, at my pleasure, taunted her,
And she, in mild terms, begg'd my patience,
I then did ask of her that changeling child;
Which straight she gave me.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes.
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain;
That he, awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair,
And think no more of this night's accidents,
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.

Be, as thou wast wont to be,

[*Touching her eyes with an herb.*

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

See, as thou wast wont to see :
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessed power.

Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet queen.

Tita. My Oberon! what visions have I seen!

Methought I was enamoured of an ass.

Obe. There lies your love.

Tita. How came these things to pass?

O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

Obe. Silence a-while.—Robin, take off this head.—

Puck. [*Removing the ass's head from BOTTOM'S shoulders.*]

Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own fool's eyes peep.

Fairy king, attend, and mark,

I do hear the morning lark.

Obe. Come, my queen, take hands with me,

And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

Now thou and I are new in amity;

And will, to-morrow midnight, solemnly,

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,

And bless it to all fair posterity:

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be

Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

[*Music, as they exchant. As they go out, BOTTOM awakes.*]

Bot. When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer:—my next is, *Most fair Pyramus*.—Hey ho!—[*He sits up.*] Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! By my life! stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream,—past the wit of man to say what dream it was.—Man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was—and I methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called *Bottom's Dream*, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke:

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it
after Thisbe's death. [Exit BOTTOM.]

[After a strain of music daybreak begins to appear. The sun rises. The glen and tangled wood disappear, as the mists ascend and discover the lovers asleep as before. Hunting-music is heard, and a pleasure-barge appears in the background bearing THESEUS, HIPPOLITA, EGEUS, PHILOSTRATE, and others. It pauses at the c., and THESEUS and the others disembark.]

The. Go, one of you, find out the forester,
For now our observation is performed;
And since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple in the western valley; let them go:
Despatch, I say, and find the forester. [Exit PHILOSTRATE.]
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

Hip. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear
With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear
Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry: I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

The. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-knee'd and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:
Judge, when you hear.—But, soft; what nymphs are these?

Ege. [Who has discovered HERMIA and beckoned to THESEUS.] My lord, this is my daughter here asleep;

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

And this Lysander ; this Demetrius is ;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena :
I wonder of their being here together.

The. No doubt they rose up early, to observe
The rite of May ; and, hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.
But, speak, Egeus ; is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice ?

Ege. It is, my lord.

The. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[*Horns heard, and PHILOSTRATE re-enters. DEMETRIUS,
LYSANDER, HERMIA, and HELENA wake and start up.*

The. Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past.

Lys. Pardon, my lord.

[*He and the rest kneel to THESEUS.*

The. I pray you all, stand up.

I know, you two are rival enemies ;
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy,
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity ?

Lys. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half 'sleep, half waking,
I came with Hermia hither : our intent
Was, to be gone from Athens, where we might be
Without the peril of the Athenian law.

Ege. Enough, enough, my lord ; you have enough :
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.
They would have stol'n away, they would, Demetrius ;
Thereby to have defeated you and me :
You of your wife, and me of my consent.

Dem. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither, to this wood ;
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,
(But, by some power it is,) my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

As the remembrance of an idle gaud,
Which in my childhood I did dote upon :
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object, and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia.

The. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met :
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.
Egeus, I will overbear your will,
For in the temple, by and by with us,
These couples shall eternally be knit.
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purpos'd hunting shall be set aside.
Away, with us, to Athens ; three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.
Come, Hippolita.

[*He re-enters the barge with HIPPOLITA and EGEUS,
PHILOSTRATE following.*

Hel. Are you sure
That we are awake ? It seems to me,
That yet we sleep, we dream.—Do not you think,
The duke was here, and bid us follow him ?

Her. Yea, he did bid us follow to the temple.

Dem. Why then, we are awake : let's follow him,
And, by the way, let us recount our dreams.

[*Exeunt into the barge.*

[*As the barge begins to move off the picture changes, showing the passage of THESEUS to his capital.*

CURTAIN.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—THE HOUSE OF QUINCE AGAIN.

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

Quin. Have you sent to Bottom's house? Is he come home yet?

Star. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt, he is transported.

Flu. If he come not, then the play is marred. It goes not forward, doth it?

Quin. It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus, but Bottom.

Flu. No; he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

Quin. Yea, and the best person too: and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flu. You must say, paragon: a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

Enter SNUG.

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more, married: if our sport had gone forward we had all been made men.

Flu. O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a-day during his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a-day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a-day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a-day, in Pyramus, or nothing.

Enter BOTTOM.

Bot. Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Quin. Bottom!—O most courageous day! O most happy hour! [*They all crowd about him.*]

Bot. Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.

Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

Bot. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together; good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for, the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisbe have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions, nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words; away; go, away. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—THE PALACE OF THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLITA, and Lords, and attendants.

Hip. 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

The. More strange than true. I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast space can hold—
That is, the madman; the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, and HELENA, with
EGEUS.

The. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.—
Joy, gentle friends! joy, and fresh days of love,
Accompany your hearts!

Lys. More than to us,
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

The. Come now; what masks, what dances shall we have,
To wear away this long age of three hours?
Where is our usual manager of mirth?
What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate. [PHILOSTRATE enters from R.]

Philost. Here, mighty Theseus.

The. Say, what abridgment have you for this evening?
What mask, what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy time, if not with some delight?

Philost. There is a brief, how many sports are ripe;
Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[Offers a paper to THESEUS, who directs DEMETRIUS to
read.]

Dem. [Reads.] *The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung,
By an Athenian cunuch to the harp.*

The. We'll none of that: that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

Dem. *The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.*

The. That is an old device, and it was play'd
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

Dem. *A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus,
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth—*

The. Merry and tragical? Tedious and brief?
That is, hot ice, and wondrous strange snow.
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

Philost. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long;
Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long;

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Which makes it tedious : for in all the play,
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
And tragical, my noble lord, it is ;
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
Which, when I saw rehears'd, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water ; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

The. What are they that do play it ?

Philost. Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,
Which never labour'd in their minds till now ;
And now have toil'd their unbreath'd memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.

The. I will hear that play ;
For never anything can be amiss,
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in : and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit PHILOSTRATE, R. HELENA and HERMIA, LYSAN-
DER and DEMETRIUS, with EGEUS, recline on the di-
vans at L. THESEUS and HIPPOLITA and Court sit R.*]

Hip. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharg'd,
And duty in his service perishing.

The. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

Hip. He says, they can do nothing in this kind.

The. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be, to take what they mistake :
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit.

Enter PHILOSTRATE.

Philost. So please your grace, the prologue is address'd.

The. Let him approach. [Flourish of trumpets.]

*Enter upon the platform at back PETER QUINCE, representing
PROLOGUE.*

Prol. If we offend, it is with our good will.

That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then, we come but in despite.

We do not come, as minding to content you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight,
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand ; and by their show,
You shall know all, that you are like to know.

The. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lys. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt ; he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord : it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

Hip. Indeed, he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder ; a sound, but not in government.

The. His speech was like a tangled chain ; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next ?

[*During the following, as each man is named he enters, bows, and goes above and stands until the end of the Prologue.* BOTTOM as PYRAMUS, FLUTE as THISBE, SNOOT as WALL, STARVELING as MOONSHINE, and SNUG as LION. PROLOGUE is a very aged man, crowned with bays.

Pro. Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show ;

But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know ;

This beauteous lady Thisbe is, certain.

This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present

Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder :

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content

To whisper ; at the which let no man wonder.

This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,

Presenteth Moonshine : for, if you will know,

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.

This grisly beast, which by name Lion hight,

The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,

Did scare away, or rather did affright :

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall ;

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain :
Whereat with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast ;
And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain,
At large discourse, while here they do remain.

[*Exeunt* PROLOGUE, THISBE, PYRAMUS, WALL, MOONSHINE, and LION last, bowing many times.

The. I wonder, if the lion be to speak.

Dem. No wonder, my lord : one lion may, when many asses do.

Re-enter WALL.

Wall. In this same interlude, it doth befall,
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall :
And such a wall as I would have you think,
That had in it a cranny'd hole, or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this rough-cast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall ; the truth is so :
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

The. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better ?

Dem. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

PYRAMUS enters.

The. Pyramus draws near the wall : silence.

Pyr. O grim-look'd night ! O night with hue so black !

O night, which ever art when day is not !

O night, O night, alack, alack, alack,

I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot !—

And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall ;

That stand'st between her father's ground and mine,

Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,

Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine cyne.

[WALL holds up his fingers.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Thanks, courteous wall : Jove shield thee well for this !

But what see I ? No Thisbe do I see.

O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss ;

Curs'd be thy stone for thus deceiving me !

The. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Bot. No, in truth, sir, he should not. *Deceiving me* is Thisbe's cue : she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you :—yonder she comes.

Enter THISBE.

This. O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
For parting my fair Pyramus and me !

Pyr. I see a voice : now will I to the chink,
To spy an I can hear my Thisbe's face.
Thisbe !

This. My love ! thou art my love, I think.

Pyr. Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace
And like Limander am I trusty still.

This. And I like Helen, till the fates me kill.

Pyr. Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

This. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

Pyr. O, kiss me through the chink of this vile wall.

This. I kiss the wall and not your lips at all.

Pyr. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway ?

This. 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.

[Exeunt THISBE and PYRAMUS, severally.]

Wall. Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so ;
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go. *[Exit WALL.]*

Hip. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

The. The best in this kind are but shadows ; and the worst
are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Hip. It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.

The. If we imagine no worse of them, than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. *[Enter LION and MOONSHINE.]* Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

[LION, before he speaks, removes his head and bows to the Court.]

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Lion. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now, perchance, both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am
No lion fell, nor else no lion's dam :
For if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

[*Puts on his head again.*]

Hel. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

Dem. The very best at a beast, that e'er I saw.

Her. This lion is a very fox for his valour.

Lys. True; and a goose for his discretion. [*Enter the MOONSHINE.*] It is well: leave it to his discretion, and let us hearken to the moon.

Moon. This lantern doth the horned moon present ;
Myself the man i' th' moon doth seem to be.

The. This is the greatest error of all the rest : the man
should be put into the lantern : how is it else the man i' the
moon ?

Dem. He dares not come there for the candle : for, you
see, it is already in snuff.

Hel. I am awearry of this moon ; would he would change.

Her. It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is
in the wane : but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay
the time.

The. Proceed, Moon.

Moon. All that I have to say, is to tell you, that the lantern
is the moon ; I, the man in the moon ; this thorn-bush, my
thorn-bush ; and this dog, my dog.

The. Why, all these should be in the lantern ; for they
are in the moon. But, silence ; here comes Thisbe.

Enter THISBE.

This. This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love ?

Lion. Oh—

[*The LION roars.* THISBE runs off, leaving mantle.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Dem. Well roared, lion.

Hel. Well run, Thisbe.

Hip. Well shone, moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace. [LION tears THISBE'S mantle, and exit.

The. Well moused, lion.

Lys. And then came Pyramus.

Dem. And so the lion vanished.

Enter PYRAMUS.

Pyr. Sweet moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams,
I thank thee, moon, for shining now so bright;
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering streams,
I trust to taste of truest Thisbe's sight.

But stay ;—O spite !

But mark ;—poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here ?

Eyes, do you see ?

How can it be ?

O dainty duck ! O dear !

Thy mantle good,

What, stain'd with blood ?

Approach, ye furies fell !

O fates ! come, come ;

Cut thread and thrum ;

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell !

The. This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.

Hip. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyr. O, wherefore, nature, didst thou lions frame ?

Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear :

Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame,

That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with cheer.

Come, tears, confound ;

Out, sword, and wound

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

The pap of Pyramus :
Ay, that left pap
Where heart doth hop :—
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
Now am I dead,
Now am I fled,
My soul is in the sky :
Tongue, lose thy light !
Moon, take thy flight !
Now, die, die, die, die, die.

[*Dies. Exit MOONSHINE.*

The. With the help of a surgeon, he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Hip. How chance Moonshine is gone, before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover ?

The. She will find him by starlight. [*Re-enter THISBE.*] Here she comes ; and her passion ends the play.

Enter THISBE.

Hip. Methinks, she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus : I hope she will be brief.

Dem. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

This. Asleep, my love ?
What, dead, my dove ?
O Pyramus, arise,
Speak, speak. Quite dumb ?
Dead, dead ? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes,
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone :
Lovers, make moan !
His eyes were green as leeks.
O sisters three,
Come, come to me,

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

With hands as pale as milk ;
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore,
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word :
Come, trusty sword ;
Come, blade, my breast imbrue ;
And farewell, friends ;
Thus Thisbe ends :
Adieu, adieu, adieu.
[*Dics. Falls on PYRAMUS, who rolls away.*

The. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

BOTTOM *rises and bows.*

Bot. No, I assure you. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance, between two of our company ?

The. No epilogue, I pray you ; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse ; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed.

[BOTTOM *bows, and drags THISBE off the stage. Midnight sounds from various distant bells.*

The iron tongue of midnight telleth twelve :—

Lovers now list' : 'tis almost fairy time.

Sweet friends,

A fortnight hold we this solemnity,

In nightly revels, and new jollity.

[*Fairy music is heard and through the misty distance PUCK and the Goblins arise and OBERON and TITANIA, with their attendants, appear.*

Oberon. If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, (and all is mended,)
That you have but slumber'd here,
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

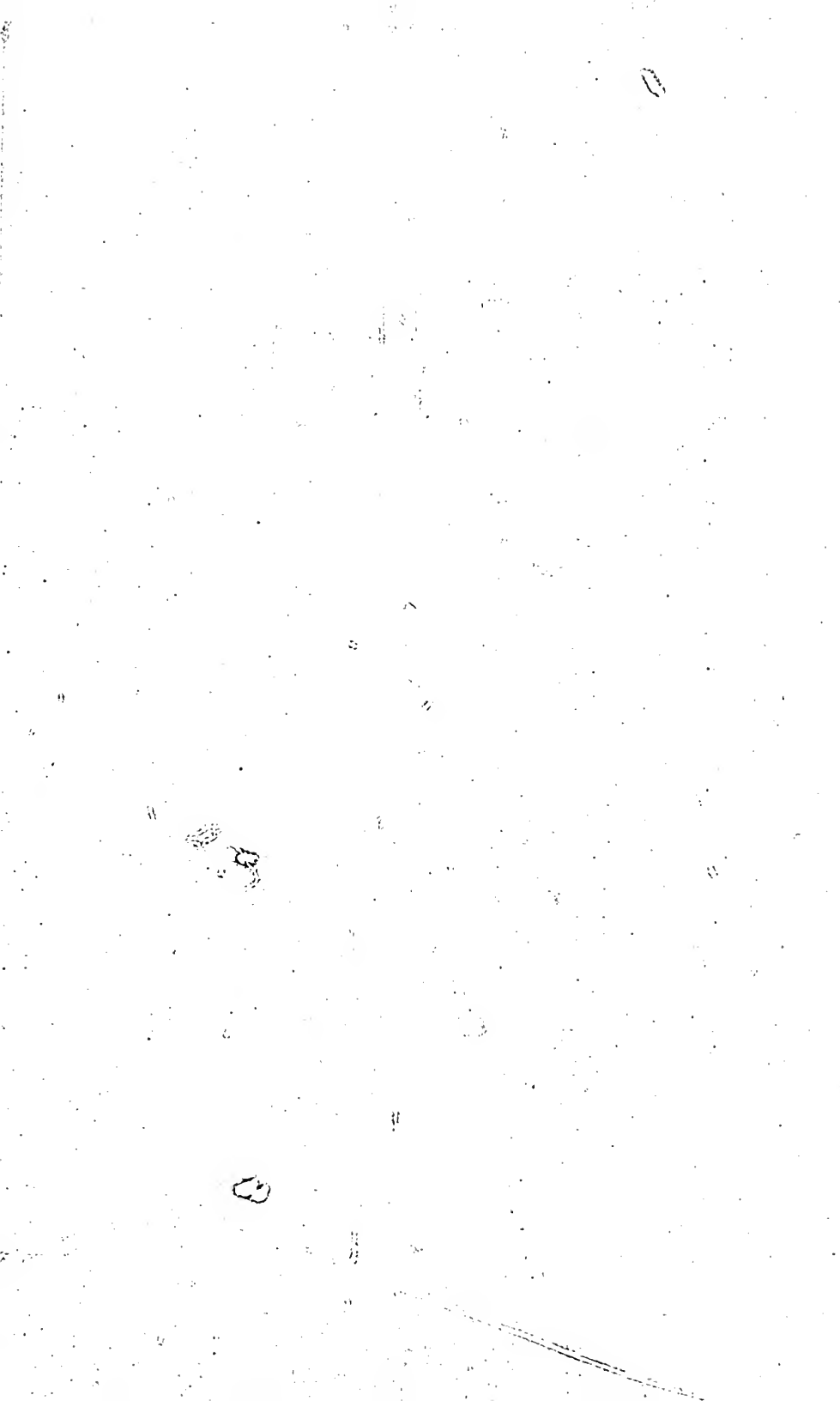
A CHORUS IS SUNG.

TITANIA [*and fairies*].

Through this house give glimmering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire—
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier.
And this ditty, after me,
Sing, and sing it trippingly.

So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be ;
Every fairy take his gait,
And each chamber consecrate ;
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace with sweet peace.

CURTAIN.



THE COMEDY OF
A
MIDSUMMER
NIGHT'S DREAM

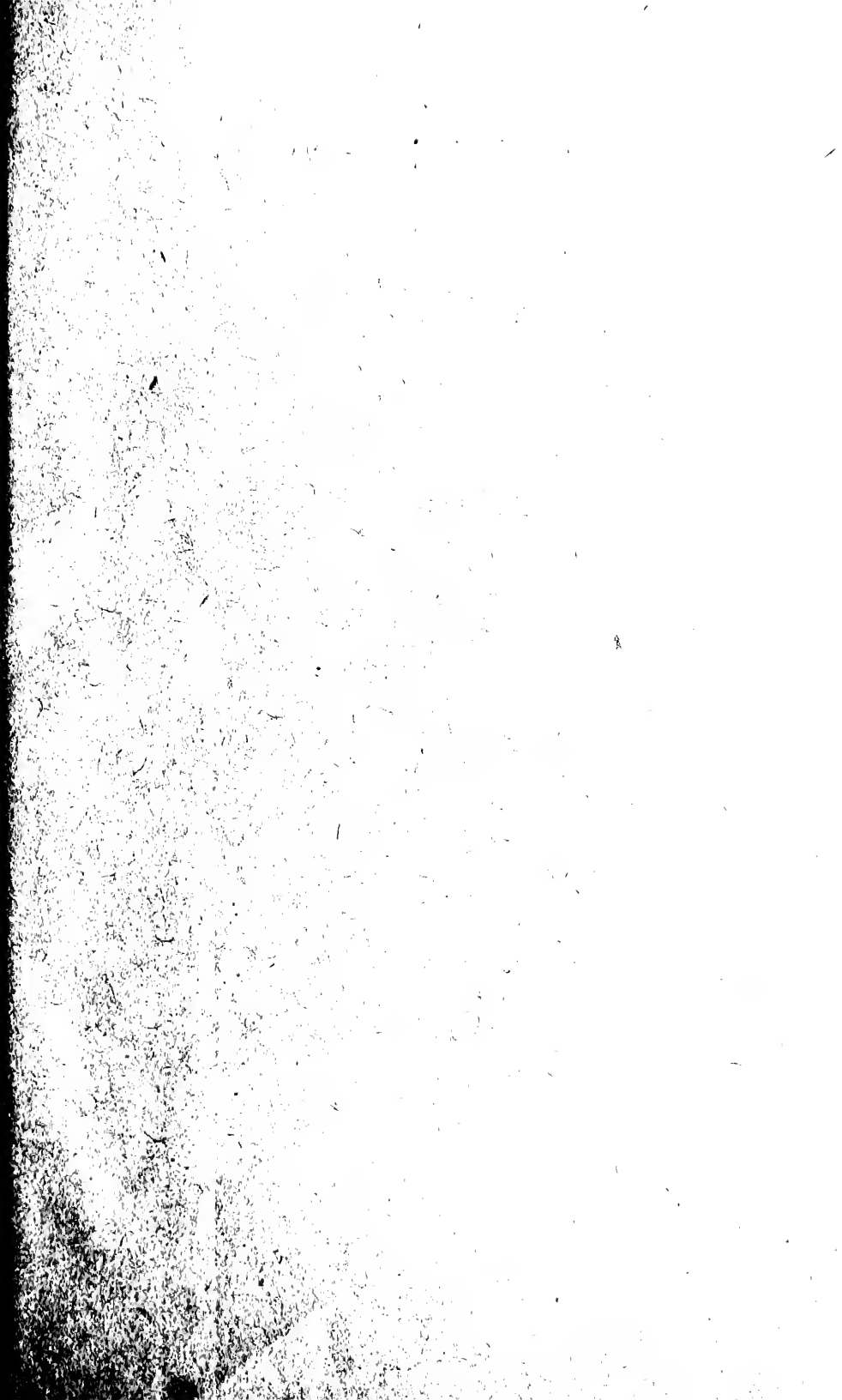
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